

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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TAGS: SENV, KE, OCON
SUBJECT: DESERTIFICATION CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 177125

1. AUGUST 4 MEETING CALLED BY TOLBA OF
INTERESTED PERMREPS AND FOCAL POINTS TO DISCUSS UPCOMING
UN CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION (UNCOD), WHILE USEFUL AND
INFORMATIVE, WAS NOT WIDE-RANGING GIVE AND TAKE SESSION
EXPECTED BY PERMREP AND ANTICIPATED BY DEPARTMENT. IT CONSISTED
RATHER OF EIGHTY MINUTE MONOLOGUE BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
(HALF OF WHICH DEVOTED TO UNEP MATTERS OTHER THAN UNCOD),
FOLLOWED BY QUESTION PERIOD DURING WHICH ONLY CANADIAN,
JAPANESE AND US REPS POSED ANY QUESTIONS AND REMAINDER OF
PARTICIPANTS REMAINED MUTE AND OBVIOUSLY HOPEFUL
MEETING WOULD SOON END. PERMREF THEREFORE DID NOT RAISE
ALL POINTS SUGGESTED REFTEL, BUT DID MEET PRIVATELY WITH
TOWNLEY AFTER FULL MEETING HAD ENDED IN ATTEMPT TO ROUND
OUT INFORMATION.

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2. IN HIS REMARKS, TOLBA ADDRESSED FOLLOWING SPECIFIC
TOPICS:

A) INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS - SUBJECTS TO BE CONSIDERED
INCLUDE RULES OF PROCEDURE, ADOPTION OF AGENDA, AND TIME-
TABLE. HE HOPES TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THESE ITEMS
AND PRESENT OPENING SESSION OF CONFERENCE WITH CONFERENCE

ROOM PAPER. HE ALSO HOPES TO REACH AGREEMENT ON SINGLE SLATE OF OFFICERS. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE HOPES GOVERNMENTS WILL GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO " APPROPRIATE" NUMBER OF VICE-PRESIDENTS. HE PERSONALLY FELT THAT THIRTY (MAXIMUM NUMBER PROVIDED FOR IN RULES OF PROCEDURE) WOULD PROVE FAR TOO UNWIELDY FOR BUREAU TO FUNCTION EFFICIENTLY. (FYI - TOWNLEY LATER TOLD ME VICE-PRESIDENTS, IN ANY CASE, WERE NOT PART OF BUREAU.)

B) CONFERENCE PROCEDURES - HE HOPED TO OPERATE MUCH AS HE HAD DURING GC V IN KEEPING CONTENTIOUS ISSUES FROM COMING TO FLOOR BY IDENTIFYING THEM EARLY, MEETING WITH CHAIRMEN OF REGIONAL GROUPS, REACHING AGREEMENT IN THESE MEETINGS AND PRESENTING PLENARY WITH ALREADY-AGREED COMPROMISE.

C) PLAN OF ACTION - HE OBVIOUSLY WISHES CONFERENCE TO ENDORSE THIS, BUT SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGES, ADDITIONS, DELETIONS FROM GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE WELCOME. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT SIMPLE STAMP OF APPROVAL WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT. HE WOULD INSIST THAT CONFERENCE PROVIDE MECHANISM FOR FOLLOW-UP. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE CITED ECOSOC CALL FOR SPECIAL SESSION TO FOLLOW UP ON WATER CONFERENCE, AND SAID HE DID NOT WANT SIMILAR SITUATION WITH UNCOD. HE HAD NO RIGID IDEAS AS TO SPECIFIC MECHANISM FOR FOLLOW-UP, AND INVITED SUGGESTIONS FROM GOVERNMENT. BUT HE SIMPLY WISHED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD INSIST ON SOME MECHANISM. (TOLBA HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POINT STRONGLY TO AMBASSADOR LE MELLE EARLIER THIS WEEK AND ALSO TO PERMREP WHEN HE PRESENTED CREDENTIALS AUGUST 3.)

D) METHODOLOGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN OF ACTION - HIS DISCUSSION HERE WAS SOMEWHAT VAGUE, BUT HE BASICALLY SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT A CONSORTIUM APPROACH (SEE DOCUMENT A/CONF. 74/3/ADD.2, PARAS 31 AND 32) WAS BEST. HE HOPED TO PRESENT TO THE CONFERENCE, IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT, CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF HOW THE COSTS OF IMPLEMENTATION MIGHT BE MET AND SHARED. (IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION BY JAPANESE, TOLBA EXPLAINED THAT HE ENVISAGED CONSORTIUM AS SIMILAR TO CLUB DES AMIS DU SAHEL).

3. CONCERNING SPECIFIC ISSUES RAISED PARA 3 REFTEL:

A) DESERTIFICATION UNIT - TOLBA ENVISAGES VERY SMALL UNIT WITHIN PROGRAM DIVISION OF UNEP, NO LARGER THAN NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS (7 OR 8) ALREADY ON SECRETARIAT WORKING ON DESERTIFICATION. (TOWNLEY LATER TOLD ME THAT HE IS OPPOSED TO THIS IDEA, AND WOULD PREFER TO SEE SEPARATE BODY "SUSPENDED" AMONG UNEP, UNDP AND PERHAPS FAO.)

B) ADVISORY COUNCIL TO ECB - THIS WOULD BE COMPOSED OF DIRECTORS OF REGIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND TOLBA SEES IT PROVING VALUABLE ADDITIONAL INPUT TO COMPLEMENT ECB'S

OWN IDEAS. TOWNLEY ENVISAGES COUNCIL DETERMINING WHAT RESEARCH IS NEEDED, IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BEST SUITED TO DO THE RESEARCH, AND THEN "BEEFING THEM UP" THROUGH EXCHANGE AND ADVISORY VISITS.

C. MONITORING PROGRAMS AND GEMS - TOWNLEY AGREES THAT "CONCEPTUALLY" PROGRAM COULD GO FORWARD UNDER GEMS, BUT EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT THAT GEMS IS IN FACT AT THE POINT WHERE IT COULD DO THE JOB. HE FORESEES MONITORING PROGRAM AS "JIG-SAW PUZZLE", STARTING WITH FEW SMALL PIECES, INCREASING, AND EVENTUALLY FITTING TOGETHER.

D. NEW ARID LAND CENTERS, DEMONSTRATION FARMS, ETC. - TOWNLEY CONSIDERS THIS ONE OF THE WEAK SPOTS OF THE PLAN, FEELS THEY ARE OVER-EMPHASIZED, AND DOUBTS THAT MANY ARE NEEDED. HE RECOGNIZES THAT IT IS A POLITICAL ISSUE, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HE DOUBTS THAT AGREEMENT WILL BE REACHED ON ANY SPECIFICS EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR SETTING MAXIMUM LIMITS ON NUMBERS.

E) FOLLOW-UP - SEE PARA 2 C AND D ABOVE

F) TOLBA'S EXPECTATIONS/DESIRES OF US ROLE - PERMREP RAISED THIS AT PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS. TOLBA HAD NO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS, BUT SAID - AS HE REPEATED AT AUGUST 4 MEETING - THAT HE HOPED FOR ENDORSEMENT OF PLAN OF ACTION AND FOR CONCRETE FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED AT LEVEL OF PROPOSED U.S. REPRESENTATION.

4. LACK OF DISCUSSION MADE IT DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN MEANINGFUL INSIGHTS INTO MANY GENERAL TOPICS RAISED PARA 1 REFTEL. PERMREP WILL BE MEETING INDIVIDUALLY NEXT WEEK WITH SOVIET AND OTHER COUNTERPARTS AND HOPES TO BE IN POSITION TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION. ONE POTENTIALLY CONTENTIOUS ISSUE WHICH TOLBA DISCUSSED WITH PERMREP IS THAT OF FINANCING. HE IS CONVINCED THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF FUND IS OUT OF QUESTION, AND AS STATED ABOVE FAVORS ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSORTIUM. HE NEVERTHELESS ANTICIPATES THAT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WILL MAKE STRONG PUSH FOR FUND.

5. FRG DELEGATION WILL NUMBER 14 AND WILL BE HEADED BY STATE SECRETARY. AUSTRALIA, JAPAN AND SWEDEN WILL EACH HAVE 8 OR 9 MEMBER DELEGATIONS, HEADED BY THEIR LOCAL AMBASSADORS.

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